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SUBJECT: MOLDOVA: 2008-2009 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT (INCSR) PART I: DRUGS AND
CHEMICAL CONTROL

1. Summary: Moldova continues to grow as a drug-transit country and drug-related crime rates continue to increase. In 2008, Moldovan law enforcement seized unprecedented quantities of heroin and cocaine. Moldova does not produce a significant amount of narcotics or precursor chemicals. Despite the fact that widespread poverty makes Moldova a relatively unattractive market for narcotics sales, drug usage within Moldova remains a concern. There was increased use of heroin and ecstasy in 2008. Moldova is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention. End Summary.

Status of Country

2. Moldova is an agriculturally rich nation with a climate favorable for cultivating marijuana and poppy, although annual domestic production of marijuana is estimated at just several hundred kilograms. Authorities regularly seize and destroy illicitly cultivated hemp and poppy plants. The market for domestically produced narcotics remains small, and is largely confined to local production areas. Geopolitical changes, Moldova's proximity to the European Union, corruption, and the limited capacity of law enforcement resulted in the increased import of synthetic drugs and the increased smuggling of narcotic and psychotropic substances into Moldova in 2008. Investigations conducted in 2008 revealed a decreased number of cases involving narcotic substances of synthetic origin, such as methamphetamine, amphetamine, and Ecstasy (MDMA), as well as diverted licit opiates such as codeine. According to the Moldovan Ministry of Interior (MOI), domestic drug traffickers remain closely connected to organized crime in neighboring countries such as Turkey, Israel, Ukraine, Romania and Russia. Moldovan authorities also reported an increase in homemade drugs. Control over the movement of licit narcotic and psychotropic substances, as well as precursors, is maintained by the permanent Drug Control Committee of the Ministry of Health.

Country Actions Against Drugs in 2008

3. Policy Initiatives: The Ministry of Interior is responsible for counternarcotics law enforcement. Its Drug Enforcement Unit, formerly known as the Anti-Drug Unit, has 78 officers nationwide. The unit continues to strengthen its efforts to counter narcotics activity based on the following Government of Moldova (GOM) actions:

- Government Decision no.314, passed March 17, 2007. This decision approved the National Plan of Action for the years 2007-2009 to prevent drug abuse and drug smuggling. It covers the activities of the MOI and Ministry of Health;
- MOI's Drug Enforcement Strategy for 2008-2012. This strategy aims to prevent drug abuse and drug smuggling;
- European Union (EU) Commission report dated April 3,

¶2008. The EU-Moldova Plan of Action for 2005-2007 was successfully implemented. A new agreement and subsequent Plan of Action are in the negotiation phase and will be eventually signed by the GOM and the EU;

¶4. Pursuant to its mission of curbing the threat of transnational crime, the Ministry of Interior established the Department of Operative Service in April ¶2006. This department was created to ensure effective cooperation among existing GOM law enforcement authorities in combating cross-border crime. Additionally, the Drug Enforcement Unit and other law enforcement agencies drafted a Common Action Plan to combat the trafficking of drugs (and precursors) by means of railway transport. This plan involved the Ministry of Interior, Information and Security Service, Customs Service, Border Guards Service and Ministry of Transportation and Roads.

Law Enforcement Efforts

¶5. Moldovan authorities registered 1,747 drug-related cases in the first nine months of 2008, compared with 1,985 cases during the same period in 2007. In 96.7% of drug-related cases, a criminal investigation was initiated, with 70.9% of these cases going to trial. In 2008, 20.8 kg of poppy straw and 1.611 liters of liquid opium were seized through September, compared to 95 kg of poppy straw and 10 liters of opium seized for the same period in 2007. Marijuana seizures in 2008 constituted 151.4 kg, compared to 230 kg seized during ¶2007. Synthetic drug seizures also decreased significantly in 2008. In 2007 170 Ecstasy pills were seized, compared to 31,265 pills in 2007. One ml of methamphetamine and 480 grams of amphetamine were seized in 2008, compared to 189 ml and 881 grams in 2007. Likewise, 200 pills of codeine were seized in 2008 versus 950 pills in 2007. LSD seizure, however, increased from 2 LSD saturated papers (2 doses) through September 2007, to 231 LSD saturated papers (231 doses) during the same period in 2008.

¶6. Through September 2008, the Drug Enforcement Unit's identification of drug distribution cases increased by 44.4%. In 2008, 104 crimes were detected, versus 72 for the same period in 2007. Of the 104 crimes of drug distribution this year, 21 were committed by the same criminal group. In 189 cases, extremely large quantities of drugs were seized (51 more than during the same period in 2007). Through September 2008, police detected 61 cases of illegal storage of psychotropic substances and 16 cases of smuggling of narcotic substances.

¶7. As a result of police action directed towards the identification and seizure of narcotic substances, over 300 kg of drugs were seized, an unprecedented amount. Seizures of heroin increased considerably in 2008 to 207 kg from only 1.676 grams last year through September ¶2007. This was primarily the result of one very large drug bust which took place only one block from the U.S. Embassy, where a single load of 200 kg of blocked heroin from Afghanistan was apprehended. In 2008, 69 cases of illicit circulation of heroin were registered, compared to only 11 cases in 2007.

¶8. In 2008, police identified and apprehended an international criminal organization which dealt in the smuggling, production and distribution of cocaine. As a result, 250 liters of coconut oil mixed with cocaine from Colombia and 5.5 kg of stand-alone cocaine were seized. Three clandestine laboratories were discovered with the equipment to extract, press, and pack cocaine. Weapons were also seized as a result of this operation. The exact quantity of cocaine that could be extracted from the coconut oil has not been determined, but is approximated to be 25 kg. Moldova does not have the

laboratory facilities to adequately process and analyze this haul.

¶9. Moldova will need to invest significant resources in education, border control, and further law enforcement initiatives if it hopes to stem the growth of domestic drug use. Because of its entrenched poverty and the scarcity of government resources, significant additional government investment is unlikely. Moldova remains the poorest country in Europe.

¶10. In response to Moldova's call for international monitoring of the border along the secessionist, break-away region of Transnistria, the EU dispatched a Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in December 2005 to help stem the flow of illegal trade between Ukraine and Moldova, and to crack down on smuggling, strengthen customs procedures, and facilitate cross-border cooperation. EUBAM's activities are based on the Memorandum of Agreement signed between Moldova, Ukraine, and the European Commission. The parties agreed to extend the mandate of EUBAM until November 2009.

Corruption

¶11. Corruption at all levels is systemic within Moldova. The Center for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption (CCECC) is the law enforcement agency responsible for investigating corruption allegations, including those related to narcotics. The CCECC has been accused of political bias in targeting its investigations, although not in regard to narcotics cases. The GOM as a matter of policy does not encourage or facilitate the production or distribution of drugs or money laundering from illegal drug transactions.

¶12. On October 9, 2007, the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation's Threshold Country Program officially launched its implementation phase in Moldova. With \$24.7 million in MCC assistance over two years, Moldova seeks to reduce corruption in the public sector through judicial reform, health care reform, tax reform, customs reform, and reform of the police agencies and CCECC. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training has provided technical assistance and training for the CCECC. DOJ's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program has provided technical assistance and training to the MOI and Customs Department.

Agreements and Treaties

¶13. Moldova is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1961 UN Single Convention. Moldova is also party to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling.

Cultivation/Production

¶14. Each year, between June and August, the Ministry of Interior launches a special law enforcement operation called "Operation Poppy". This operation targets illicit poppy, hemp, and marijuana fields for eradication and reinvigorates other counter-drug efforts. As a result of Operation Poppy in 2008, 579 criminal cases involving the illegal cultivation of poppy and cannabis were initiated. The cases included the following: 445 cases of the cultivation of poppy plants (resulting in the eradication of 15.768 kg of raw material) and 134 cases of the cultivation of cannabis (resulting in the eradication of 8.845 kg of raw material).

Drug Flow/Transit

¶15. Seizures of illicit narcotics in 2008 continue to indicate that Moldova remains primarily a trans-shipment country for narcotics. Information provided by the MOI indicates that two of the predominant heroin routes are from Ukraine through Moldova into Western Europe and from Turkey through Romania/Moldova into Russia and near-by states. The major cocaine route is from Colombia through Panama to Ukraine to Moldova then into Western Europe.

Domestic Programs/Demand Reduction

¶16. In 2008, the Ministry of Interior reinvigorated its efforts regarding the provision of social services and on strengthening the relationship between the police and society. The MOI and local NGO "New Life" organized a training program in "Creation and Development of Assistance Groups," covering the northern and southern regions of the country. MOI also organized a series of lectures at educational institutions in the country aimed at emphasizing the dangers of drug abuse to young people. Posters and brochures containing information about the consequences of drug use and ways to protect oneself from drug pushers' solicitations were distributed. The MOI publicized information about cases involving the apprehension and arrest of drug traffickers, by means of press conferences, television shows, high-profile media releases, and announcements on its internet site. In August and September 2008, the MOI augmented its collaboration with local public administrations by holding two working meetings which took place in different parts of the country. These meetings involved representatives of public administrations, education departments, health departments, NGOs, UN agencies, along with narcotics drug specialists, local council representatives, prosecutors, and local police. They discussed drug abuse prevention and counternarcotics activities.

¶17. Private drug treatment is an option only for the wealthiest of drug abusers. The GOM and NGOs continue to provide information about narcotics and conduct some educational and media campaigns. Neither NGOs nor the government offer adequate drug treatment for those already addicted.

U.S. Policy Initiatives: Bilateral Cooperation

¶18. Ongoing U.S. Government (USG) training and the provision of equipment are designed to improve the ability of police to investigate and infiltrate organized crime and narcotics enterprises. The USG also offers assistance in customs and border control, with programs specifically aimed at strengthening Moldovan border control. Although not specifically related to narcotics, these programs have a spin-off effect of reducing the flow of illegal goods through Moldova, including narcotics. During 2008, the USG financed basic and specialized law enforcement training programs via the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), which included narcotics enforcement modules. INL also supported the GOM through the donation of equipment. The USG supported visits to the U.S. for police, anti-corruption, and customs officers for various capacity-building and developmental programs. These programs focused on enhancing techniques related to combating corruption, money laundering, illicit drug trafficking, and organized crime.

The Road Ahead

¶19. The U.S. and Moldova continue to work together through U.S. assistance programs to help improve the ability of Moldovan law enforcement to target the movement of illicit goods and persons through Moldovan territory.

CHAUDHRY